

History and Facts
Newton Union Cemetery
Newton, Iowa

One measure of the pride of any community is the condition of its cemetery. The superior maintenance of Newton Union is a reflection of the pride and respect which Newton has for the heritage which has been left by its former residents. The cemetery provides a record of the development of Newton and a link with the past.

One hundred thirty-five [152] years ago, Newton Union Cemetery was established in an area of native trees and hazel brush. From the original 11 1/2 acres, purchased from Jacob and Elizabeth Guthrie, it has grown to contain almost 60 acres.

The older sections of the cemetery were laid out in lots of 8 and 12 graves, with walkways surrounding each lot. Either half or full lots could be purchased. Most lots were mounded, and a few still retain their original curbing. Some lots were designated "single entry," and in these one or more spaces could be purchased as needed. Today, spaces in the newer sections are purchased in the number needed, and memorials may be no more than 12 inches tall. A separate "Potter's Field" was maintained for many years, not only as a place to bury indigents, but also as an area where single graves could be purchased. Newton Union has three areas which are primarily devoted to infant burials.

From the beginning, Newton Union was developed in a very orderly manner, with thought given to the future. Families tended to bury their dead in family lots, and even in 1992 burials are still being made in lots which belong to the heirs of the original purchasers of over one hundred [100] years ago.

The first records of the cemetery were destroyed about 1889, which made the identification of unmarked graves difficult. This problem is compounded by the absence of early newspaper files and funeral home records.

The first town cemetery, the Newton Graveyard, was located north of the Square where the Newton Optometric Center is now located. There is no record of the number of burials, nor of the date of the first burial. Since the cemetery is shown on the 1846 plat of Newton, it may be assumed that the first burial could have been made before 1850.

Newton Union was established in 1854 as the Ladies Union Circle Cemetery, and it is possible that burials were made in both cemeteries until about 1858. The bodies in the Newton Graveyard were moved to Newton Union prior to the Civil War so death prior to 1854 indicates the burial was first made in another cemetery. In 1984 the gravestone of William Nosler, 1852-1853, was found on the Newton Graveyard site. The stone was later placed in Newton Union, along with a small box of earth from the grave yard site.

Reaching Newton Union in the early days was not always easy. It was the custom for many of the mourners to follow the hearse on foot. Wet weather turned the road into a quagmire, a fact noted in some obituaries. Morgan Funeral Home records indicate that a sled was sometimes used to carry coffins to the cemetery in winter.

In 1888, a 4 foot wide walk of seasoned white oak, 350 rods long, was constructed so that foot travel to the cemetery would be easier. The walk remained in use for 19 years. In 1894, an effort was made to improve the road, but it was not until 1920 that paving was extended from Joe Horn's house on 1st Street North to the cemetery.

In 1927, E. A. Thornton donated \$500 to pave the cemetery street from the H. J. Skiff lot to the chapel. In 1928, his will specified that his estate was to be used to finish the cemetery paving. By paving only single lanes, the city was able to complete the project using Mr. Thornton's funds.

Women played an important part in the development of the cemetery. Original cemetery lot deeds were issued by the Ladies Union Circle, women urged the construction of the sidewalk, started the street paving project, and in 1921 formed the Newton Cemetery Improvement Association which provided for the establishment of a perpetual care fund.

In 1900, a cemetery chapel was built on Lot 71, Block 5. It contained a small reed organ given to the cemetery by the Busy Bee society. The chapel was most often used for brief services for individuals who were returned to Newton for burial. When the chapel was razed after the second world war, it was found that it had been built over an unmarked grave.

A community mausoleum, containing 200 crypts, was constructed in 1910. It was "so firmly built that it would be almost impossible for the strongest cyclonic wind to harm it." In the fall of 1930 "one of the towers, erected on the corners of the building, toppled over and plunged through the roof, causing considerable wreck and ruin." This ended the controversy over the future of the rapidly deteriorating structure, and in 1931, the mausoleum was razed after the last of the forty bodies had been removed. It is still possible to see the outline of the foundation of the mausoleum between Blocks 14 and 15.

There are three private mausoleums in Newton Union. Colonel William Manning and John Schnell both built two crypt mausoleums, and F. I. Maytag is buried in a four crypt vestibule type mausoleum. In 1988, major repairs were made to the Maytag mausoleum after it was discovered that the mortar around the cornerstone had deteriorated and that the north was becoming bowed. The mausoleum's plantings were removed at this time because it was determined that they were causing structural harm.

A fourth private mausoleum, or vault, was constructed by Dr. Marion R. Hammer. Because of the poor manner in which it was constructed, it was never used. Dr. Hammer also had a copper covered cyprus coffin built locally and it was placed in the community mausoleum. Dr. Hammer supervised the construction of the coffin, and several times he climbed into it to insure that it would properly fit. The coffin deteriorated in the mausoleum, and Dr. Hammer was buried in a massive glass casket when he died in 1940. Probably no person buried in Newton Union spent more time and effort planning for his own burial than Dr. Hammer.

Newton Union is the burial place for veterans from all wars except the American Revolution. Three veterans of the War of 1812 and 254 Union veterans have been joined by veterans from all of the succeeding wars. Although most of the Union veterans are buried on family lots, two separate areas are dedicated to those who had no family plots. After the "Civil War Mound" was filled, Garrett Post No. 16 acquired 4 lots in Block 8, heading a directive from G.A.R. headquarters, that no Union soldiers should be buried in "Potter's Fields." In 1935, a section of over 300 grave sites was established for the burial of veterans and their wives. Another 786 spaces were added to the section in 1980.

On Memorial Day about 400 American flags are placed along both sides of the street from the main gate to the Veteran's section. In addition, hundreds of small flags are placed on individual graves. One feature of the Memorial Day observance is a walking concert by the Newton Municipal band, which plays selections at the graves of its former members. The formal Memorial Day program is organized by the veteran's organizations.

When the city added the land to the west of the original sections of the cemetery, Ray F. Wyrick, a well known cemetery landscape engineer, was hired to lay out the roads and to advise the city on plantings. At this time, a small spring fed lake was added on the south edge of the cemetery.

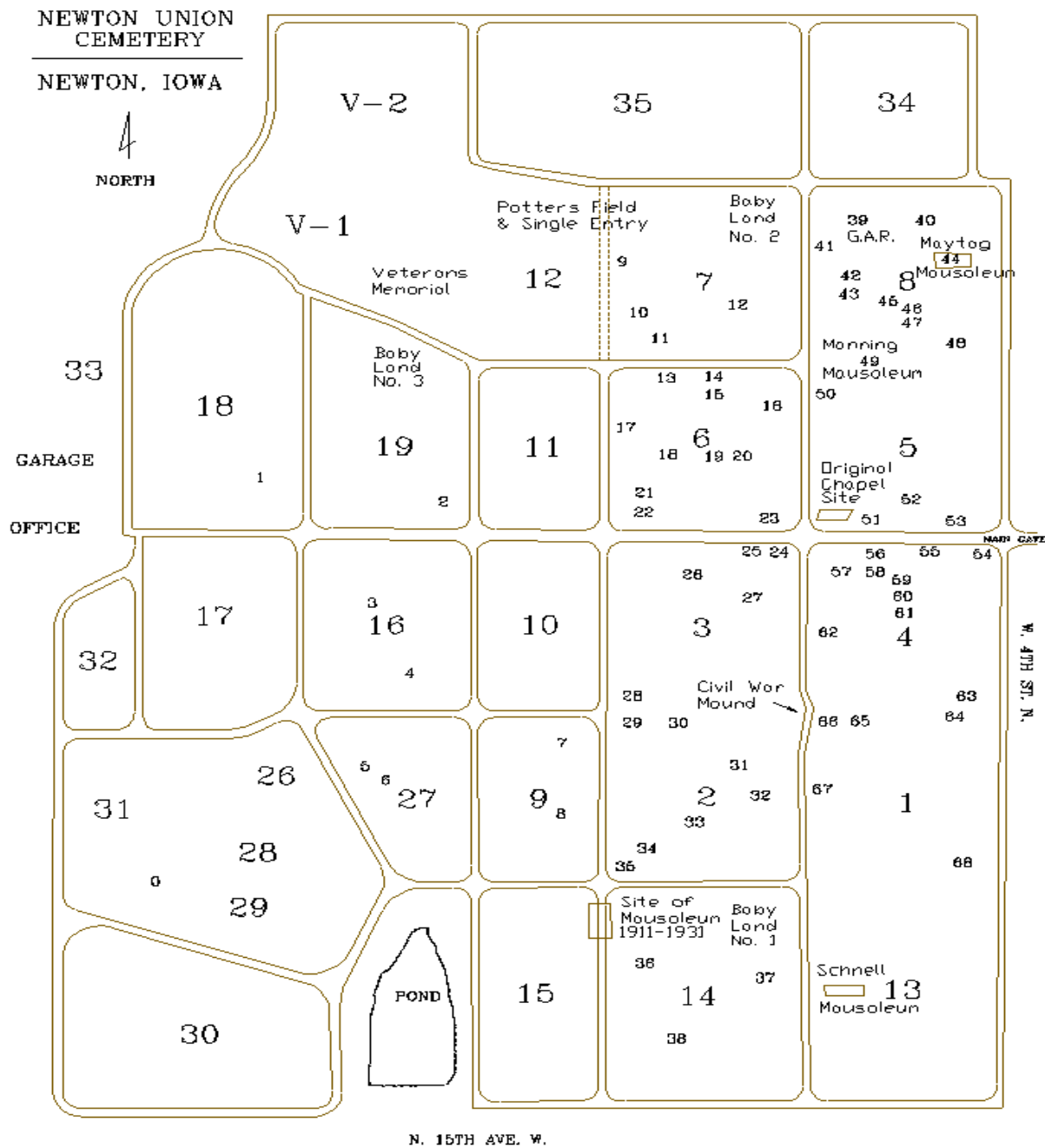
The plantings in the cemetery include many flowers such as iris, tulips, lilies of the valley, and peonies. Spiraea, lilac, and privet, along with varieties of evergreens are some of the shrubs to be seen. In the older sections of the cemetery there are oak trees over one hundred [100] years old, as well as shag bark hickories, maples, sycamores, cedars, pines, and spruces. Some of these are among the finest specimens of their species to be found in Newton.

Nearly all of the twelve basic cemetery memorial design types listed by the American Monument Association may be found in Newton Union, along with many other lot embellishments such as urns, planters, bird baths, and a bench.

A wide variety of symbols are represented in the cemetery. These include religious, military, fraternal and social, occupations, and traditional, some of which may have more than one meaning.

In 1992, paving was added at the north end of the cemetery and lot sales began in sections 34 and 35.

To the ten [10] men who are known to have served as sexton of Newton Union must go the credit for the fine appearance of the cemetery. Their dedication, along with that of the men who have assisted them, is one reason that Newton Union is considered one of the best maintained cemeteries in Iowa.



Key to Newton Union Cemetery Map

0. FREDERICK L. VERNON [1876-4 April 1964] Founder, The Vernon Co. WILLIAM F. VERNON SR. [1904-13 Feb 1974] President, The Vernon Co.

1. ELIZABETH [WILSON] CUMMING [1881-26 Sep 1986] Widow of John Cumming. She attained the second longest life span recorded in NEWTON UNION: 105 years, 4 months, 28 days.

2. REUBEN K. LAMBERT [1838-7 Sep 1918] Early Newton hotel owner, C.A.R. Son COL. ELLIOTT E. LAMBERT [1863-19 Aug 1948] served in both Spanish American and First World Wars. Was Iowa Commander of the Spanish American War Veterans.

3. F. A. "DICK" DUNN [1893-4 Sep 1981] Teacher, Co-founder Dun-Lap Manufacturing Company.

4. FANNIE [LOUPEE] WHITTAKER [1882-6 July 1988] Widow of Frederick Whittaker. She died at the age of 105 years, 7 months, 6 days, and has the longer life span of any person buried in NEWTON UNION.

5. HOMER W. DENNISTON [1895-9 Sep 1986] Civic and church leader, partner in D&P Lumber Co. Son WILLIAM "BILL" DENNISTON [1927-5 June 1946] died in LaSalle Hotel fire in Chicago.

Three of the other LaSalle victims: JOE SAM BARTON [1928], ELDON E. ADAMS [1928], and DELBERT ROUSH [1927] are buried directly east from the Denniston lot.

6. CLYDE ANGUS PECK [1887-7 Mar 1968] President, Newton Manufacturing Co. Wife VERA [PORTER] PECK [1888-2 July 1982] Civic leader, donor Peck Child Care Center.

DANIEL MARK McPHERREN [1949-13 Sep 1985] Newton Police Officer murdered in the line of duty. Grandson of Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Peck.

7. BERT BENJAMIN [1870-0 Oct 1969] Inventor of "power take-off" and "Father of the Farmall tractor". He held 140 agriculture related patents. Wife WILHELMINA [BERGMAN] BENJAMIN [1892-2 June 1960] and his parents are also buried on the lot.

8. HARRY C. McCARDELL [1872-25 May 1943] First president of the Newton National Bank. Was associated with son Edmund A. McCardell in Winpower Co.

9. DANFORTH HURLBURT AINSWORTH [1828-24 Apr 1904] Civil Engineer, capitalist. Surveyed Rock Island Railroad right-of-way from Davenport to Denver. The stylized Celtic cross monument on the Ainsworth lot is unusual.

10. GEN. JAMES WILSON [1820-24 Jan 1988] Civil War military leader, co-founder of Jasper County Savings Bank. Highest ranking military officer buried in Newton Union.

11. AUGUST WENDT [1845-26 July 1896] Merchant and advisor to German speaking residents of Newton. Wendt lot is largest in Newton Union and the draped obelisk monument is one of the tallest in the cemetery.

12. A. J. KNIGHT [1850-24 July 1894] Sells Bros. Circus employee who was killed in Newton when ramp for hippopotamus fell on his.

13. VERNON W. SKIFF [1841-29 Apr 1926] Newton merchant who donated hospital in memory of his wife MARY FRANCES [COFFIN] SKIFF [1842-30 Dec 1918]. Mr. Skiff was associated with son Frank and son-in-law F. P. Ross in Jewel Tea Co. Skiff monument has over 500 letters carved on front and back of the monument. G.A.R.

14. GEORGE W. PARSONS [1841-28 Sep 1922] Invented the Parsons Band Cutter and Self Feeder after his brother Hess lost an arm threshing.

15. PURDY M. TRAGER [1849-9 Jan 1925] Engineer at first electric light plant in Newton. Joined the Union Army at the age of 14.
16. THOMAS ALEXANDER JONES [1856-17 June 1879] Crewman on railroad locomotive, the boiler of which exploded in downtown Newton. CLYDE ALEXANDER JONES [1892-16 Aug 1920] World War I aviator, co-owner of Jones-Willis Aircraft Co. He and partner George 'Pat' Willis were killed in the crash of their plane near Colfax.
17. CHRISTIAN GRIEBELING [1832-6 Dec 1911] Wagon maker and later hardware merchant. Came to Newton in 1856. Was widely respected for his honesty and judgment. son CHARLES GRIEBELING [1862-12 Dec 1930] succeeded his father as owner of the store.
18. JACOB GUTHRIE [1802-28 Oct 1882 and wife ELIZABETH [DOLLER] GUTHRIE [1809-25 Sep 1876] owned land upon which original 40 acres of Newton Union are located.
19. SAMUEL RICHARDS [1818-19 July 1905] Flour mill owner, early benefactor of Newton Public Library. Son William was Supt. of Electrical Construction for Statue of Liberty.
20. CHAUNCEY HOWARD [1821-16 July 1882] Jasper County Sheriff, District Revenue Collector, one of the organizers of the Universalist Church in Newton.
21. SOLOMON LANGMADE [1794-25 May 1892] last of three War of 1812 veterans buried in Newton Union.
22. NANCY MINERVA [DIXON] CAMPBELL MEREDITH [1844-18 Feb 1922] Widow of Iowa Lt. Gov. F. T. Campbell, early Newton newspaper publisher and member of the Iowa Railroad Commission. Lt. Gov. Campbell is buried at Lima, Ohio. The Campbell home is inside the Newton Feed Store.
23. DARIUS THOMAS [1816-17 Oct 1892] Founder of Hazel Dell Academy. The school was later owned by Prof. George Wormley.
24. JESSE R. KENNEDY [1792-27 Sep 1874] Early Newton carpenter and land owner. Many members of his large family are buried in Newton Union.
25. ANDERSON VOWELL [1804-15 Apr 1883] Pioneer Jasper County farmer.
26. D. L. CLARK [1824-20 Sep 1903] Banker. His family monument is an unusual rough hewn obelisk.
27. DR. JOSEPH R. GORRELL [1835-25 May 1916] Civil War surgeon, Newton physician, author.
28. DENA [BERGMAN] MAYTAG [1859-18 Jan 1934] Church leader, philanthropist, wife of F. L. Maytag.
29. STEPHEN MOFFITT [1807-3 Dec 1860] Farmer. The early Moffitt stones were moved to Newton Union from the family cemetery west of town.
30. J. EVANS RYAN [1831-8 May 1903] Rector of St. Stephen's Church.
31. OLIVE JANE [KENNEDY] LAMB [1827-6 Nov 1910] When her husband and 2 sons went to Civil War she closed her house and went to the front to serve as a nurse. Husband CAPT. CALEB LAMB [1822-25 Sep 1897] was a carpenter, hotel owner, and Postmaster in Newton.
32. SAMUEL MINSKY EYERLY [1803-2 May 1871 and 3rd wife MARY ANN [THUMA] EYERLY LOVELACE [1815-20 May 1900] had 10 children, and he also had 4 more by his 2nd marriage. Possibly has more descendants than anyone else buried in Newton Union.

33. CLEM MILLER [1837-10 Feb 1914] and brother JOHN ROSS MILLER [1841-29 Dec 1923] were members of the 60th U.S. Colored Infantry. John Ross was custodian of the State Historical Building for many years. Family gravestones give first names and dates only.

34. ALBERT L. HARRAH [1843-1 Dec 1906] Farmer and cattle breeder. Monument lists wife and daughter who are buried in Mississippi.

35. CHARLES C. C. HARRAH [1841-18 Apr 1903] Congregational minister, land owner. Remains of early Harrah family members were moved from Wittemberg Cemetery.

WILLIAM N. HARRAH [1809-7 Feb 1894] Farmer. Attorney A. M. Harrah, whose family has long been associated with Harrah's Club, was a son of William and a brother of A. L. and Charles.

36. DR. MARION R. HAMMER [183-11 July 1940] Author, physician. Many fascinating stories are told about his preparations for his own funeral. He is buried in a massive glass casket.

37. FRANCISCO ALBIACH [Died 1 Aug 1912] Spanish opera tenor appearing on the Chautauqua circuit. he died unexpectedly in Newton and his body was placed in a vault at Sacred Heart Cemetery. The Broderick family later had him buried on their lot in Newton Union. The bronze ornament on his gravestone was brought from Europe by C. E. Broderick who became acquainted with Albiach's widow and son whom he met in Europe.

38. WILLIAM EDWARD JOHNSON [1851-3 Apr 1935] Last Iowa veteran of Indian War. He served as an escort for the Federal representatives to the Black Hawk Council which marked the close of the war.

39. HAMILTON PARVIN [1878-8 Nov 1927] Production Manager Maytag Co. Field stone boulder which marks the graves of Hamilton and wife PERYL [PARSONS] PARVIN [1880-17 Mar 1957] was found by them on their travels. Peryl was Newton correspondent for the Des Moines Register and Tribune.

40. PROF. ANDRE VAN HAVESKERKE [1852-9 May 1931] Musician and teacher, accomplished on nearly all instruments and in all types of music. Grandson PAUL HARRINGTON [1929-5 June 1946] dies in the LaSalle Hotel fire.

41. WILLIAM TITMUS [1859-31 Dec 1944] Harness maker for Ringling Bros. Circus. Grave is not marked.

42. THOMAS MARSEE RODGERS [1844-24 Sep 1921] Associated with Newton newspapers for over 50 years. Union veteran.

43. WILLIAM G. CLEMENTS [1847-10 Jan 1920] Iowa District Court Judge. Son Frank and grandson William were also Newton attorneys. Monument contains much genealogical information.

44. FREDERICK L. MAYTAG [1857-26 Mar 1937] Founder, The Maytag Co. His private mausoleum is one of three in Newton Union.

45. WILLIAM C. BERGMAN [1855-21 Aug 1926] Partner of F. L. Maytag and George Parsons in Self Feeder Works. Eight of his ten brothers and sisters are buried in Newton Union.

46. C. FRANK MORGAN [1851-21 Nov 1933] Succeeded cousin W. J. Morgan as owner of undertaking firm established in 1867.

47. BENJAMIN WOODROW [1807-6 Jan 1897] Banker. Father of J. M. Woodrow and JOHN R. WOODROW [1852-17 Feb 1926] Banker and nurseryman who planted trees on his home property which is now Larchwood Court.

48. ELMER HENRY MAYTAG [1883-20 July 1940] Maytag Co. president whose leadership brought the company world wide recognition. He also founded the Maytag Dairy Farms.

49. COL. WILLIAM R. MANNING [1841-24 Mar 1912] Lumber and grain. Was Iowa Department Commander of the G.A.R.

50. JOSEPH M. WOODROW [1840-1 Oct 1919] President of the Jasper County Savings Bank for 30 years. The Woodrow family purchased the bank from Gen. Wilson's heirs and operated it for about 35 years.

51. ARMENIA SAMPEY [1867-16 July 1922] Teacher of china painting and an artist in Newton and New York City. She was also an accomplished musician.

52. JEREMIAH RUMMEL ZOLLINGER [1829-24 Feb 1897] Grocer and Jasper County Sheriff, murdered on his own door step by an unapprehended assailant. His daughter GUILIELMA ZOLLINGER [1856-24 Aug 1917] was a well known author.

53. DAVID EDMUNDSON [1811-21 Jan 1892] Came to Newton in 1849 and served in the Iowa State Legislature and as a Justice of the Peace. Temperance Street [now N. 8th Ave. E.] was named for his wife TEMPERANCE [GORDON] EDMUNDSON [1821-2 Apr 1910].

54. JOSEPH BOND HOUGH [1829-13 Nov 1901] Lumber and grain dealer and father of author Emerson Hough.

55. RICHARD LAMB [1829-13 Nov 1901] Owner of farm which is now Lambs Grove.

56. ALICE VIRGINIA COFFIN [1848-28 July 1888] Teacher, one of the seven founders of PEO Sisterhood. She was a sister of Mary Frances [Coffin] Skiff. The original Coffin monument has been supplemented by a new granite monument upon which the inscriptions are near duplicates of those on the original stone.

57. BALLINGER AYDELOTT [1815-20 Aug 1905] He came to Jasper County in 1845, was Sheriff 1850-1852, and served in Union Army. After the war he was a butcher and later served as Superintendent of the County Poor Farm. Much of the early history of the county was recorded by him.

58. COL. JOHN A. GARRETT [1824-23 Jan 1877] Served in Mexican War, was Colonel in the 40th Iowa Inf. during Civil War. The Newton G.A.R. Post was named for him.

59. CEPHUS J. Housel [1818-27 Oct 1887] Watchmaker, church leader, weather observer. On the lot are buried his three wives, several of his children, his mother, and a mother-in-law.

60. CAPT. THOMAS H. MILLER [1831-12 May 1862] Earliest verified Civil War death in cemetery. He died of wounds suffered at Shiloh. Widow CATHARINE ANN [HUNTER] MILLER [1833-16 Mar 1920] survived her husband by 57 years. She was the daughter of Dr. John S. Hunter.

DR. JOHN S. HUNTER [1801- Aug 1862] One of the first physicians in Newton. Four of his sons, George B., James L., John Chalmers, and Will served in the Civil War and are buried in Newton Union.

61. PETER STRICKLAND [1764-4 Dec 1857] His birth is the earliest recorded in Newton Union.

62. JESSE RICKMAN [1816-22 Nov 1872] First County Judge, first Postmaster of Newton, important figure in the early history of the county. He was killed when struck by a locomotive. Son JOHN RICKMAN [1849-1850] is the earliest recorded death in Newton Union.

63. JAMES ROE MERSHON [1815-19 July 1901] Owner of Newton Roller Mills. Daughter Emma, an opera singer, married a wealthy Russian count, Nicholas Konshine. He lost his fortune in the revolution and she died in abject poverty in Russia in 1937.

64. COLONEL JOHN MEYER [1824-13 May 1902] Grocer, Iowa Legislator, State Senator, and Union officer. He was a trustee of Grinnell College and an active abolitionist.

65. WILLIAM ROBINSON SKIFF [1809-26 May 1881] Early newton dry goods merchant. He was the father of Vernon W. Skiff and Lizzie [Skiff] Emerson.

66. HARVEY J. SKIFF [1821-12 Nov 1904] Banker, attorney, land agent, Civil War officer, and member of the 1855 Iowa Constitutional Convention. Cousin of W. R. Skiff.

67. ANDERSON HAYES [1829-5 Oct 1923], ALEXANDER FINE [1841-8 Dec 1919, and LEWIS MAYS [1845-3 Dec 1911] were members of the 60th U.S. Colored Infantry. Members of their families are buried near them in unmarked graves.

68. FRANCIS ANNIS [1824-30 May 1864] Died in service during the Civil War. Sons FRANK [1854] and ELMER [1862] were killed 20 Dec. 2869 when struck accidentally by the same bullet.

Original Name: Ladies Union Circle Cemetery.

Area: 40 Acres [1927]. In 1966 approximately 20 acres were added to the north to be used for future expansion.

Number of burials: Over 14,147.

Earliest burial: 1854. Death date prior to that indicates that body was moved to Newton Union, most often from the Newton Graveyard which was located north of the Square.

Earliest recorded birth: Peter Strickland in 1764.

More than 20 people buried in Newton Union were born before 1800.

Oldest verified age at death: Mrs. Fannie [Loupee] Whittaker who died 6 July 1988 at the age of 105 years, 7 months, 6 days.

More than 17 of the people buried in Newton Union passed the one hundred year mark.

Veterans: Represented are all wars in which the United States has participated except the American Revolution. There are three veterans of the War of 1812 and 254 Union veterans.

This guide compiled by John Daehler, May 1989,
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